Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace the paragraph beginning on line 18 of page 5 with the following amended paragraph:

A protective guard may include a ventral (or front) portion and a ~~distal~~ dorsal (or back) portion. The ventral portion may include elastic material that functions to retain the protective guard on a medical practitioner's finger or thumb. The ~~distal~~dorsal portion may include penetration and puncture resistant material. A protective guard may have a ring-shaped cross sectional form. An inner diameter of the protective guard may be smaller than a diameter of a finger or thumb upon which the protective guard is placed. The protective guard may form a seal with a user's hand that inhibits fluid from contacting the portion of a user's hand or finger that is covered by the protective guard. The elastic properties of the material may hold the protective guard on a finger or thumb when the guard is positioned on the finger or thumb. The elastic properties of the protective guard and/or the shape of the protective guard may allow the protected finger or thumb to be bent or flexed. Alternatively, grooves may be formed in a portion of the protective guard to allow the guard to flex when the finger or thumb is bent or flexed.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on line 1 of page 6 with the following amended paragraph:

A ~~distal~~dorsal portion of a protective guard may be protective material that is puncture and penetration resistant. The ~~distal~~dorsal portion may include some flexibility so that a medical practitioner may bend a finger or thumb that the protective guard is positioned on. The ~~distal~~dorsal portion may include grooves that are positioned in the ~~distal~~dorsal portion to allow the ~~distal~~dorsal portion to flex during use. The protective guard may be rotated on a finger or thumb during use to change the location of the protective material.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on line 11 of page 7 with the following amended paragraph:

A ~~distal~~dorsal or protective portion of a protective guard may be made of a penetration resistant material that has some flexibility. The flexibility of the protective portion and the shape of the protective guard may allow a medical practitioner to bend a finger or thumb upon which is positioned the protective guard. The protective portion of the protective guard may be formed of an elastomeric polyvinylchloride compound; such as, but not limited to, Unichem®, which is supplied by Tekni-Plex Co. of New Jersey. In an embodiment, a protective portion is formed of a 0.80 millimeter, 90 Shore A durometer hardness, polyvinylchloride material. The resistance of the material to puncture by a 27 gauge needle may be over twenty-six times greater than penetration resistance of a double pair of latex gloves, each glove having a thickness between about 0.05 millimeters and 0.2 millimeters. The penetration resistance of the material to puncture by a 20 gauge needle may be over fifty-one times greater than the penetration resistance of a double pair of latex gloves, each glove having a thickness between about 0.05 millimeters and 0.2 millimeters. In some embodiments, grooves may be formed in the protective portion of the guard to increase the flexibility of the guard.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on line 9 of page 9 with the following amended paragraph:

An advantage of a protective guard is that the protective guard may be multi-colored. A protective portion of the protective guard may be a different color than less protective portions of the guard. For example, a ~~distal~~dorsal side of a protective guard that is puncture and penetration resistant may have a green color, while a ventral side of the protective guard may have a tan color. The multi-colored guard may provide a conscious reminder to a medical practitioner of the protective portion of the guard.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on line 19 of page 12 with the following amended paragraph:

Figure 6 shows an embodiment of a protective guard 20 positioned on a finger 22. An upper portion of the protective guard 20 may cover or stop in the creases of the medial joint 28

on ~~distal~~dorsal or back surface 32 of the finger 22. The shape of the protective guard 20 may allow the medical practitioner to retain flexibility of the medial finger joint 28 when the guard is placed on the finger 22.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on line 25 of page 12 with the following amended paragraph:

~~Distal~~Dorsal portion 34 of a protective guard 20 may extend beyond a fingertip of a finger 22 when the guard is placed on the finger or thumb. The protective guard 20 may optionally include lip 36. Figures 2 and 5 show an embodiment of a protective guard 20 that includes a lip 36. Contact of the lip 36 against fingernail 38 (shown in Figure 6) or end surface of a fingertip may inform a user that the protective guard 20 is fully positioned on a finger 22. The lip 36 may also inhibit the protective guard 20 from sliding up the finger 22 during use. In some embodiments, protective guards 20 do not include lips, such as in the embodiment shown in Figure 6.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on line 19 of page 13 with the following amended paragraph:

As shown in Figure 5, a ~~distal~~dorsal portion 34 of a protective guard 20 may have a longer length than a ventral portion 40 of the protective guard. The shorter length of the ventral portion 40 may facilitate bending and flexing of a user's finger 22 or thumb 26 when the protective guard 20 is positioned on the finger or thumb. The shorter length of the ventral portion 40 may also allow a portion of a user's finger or thumb pad 44 to remain uncovered when the protective guard 20 is positioned on the user's finger 22 or thumb 26, as shown in Figures 1, 7 and 8.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on line 7 of page 14 with the following amended paragraph:

A protective guard 20 may include protective portion 46 and a less protective portion 48. The protective portion 46 may be resistant to punctures, penetrations and tears. In an embodiment, the protective portion 46 may include ~~distal~~dorsal portion 34 of the protective guard 20, and the less protective or retentive portion 48 may include the ventral portion 40 of the protective guard. The less protective portion 48 of the protective guard 20 may be formed of an elastic material. The less protective portion 48 may extend between a medial finger joint 28 and a distal finger joint 42 when the protective guard 20 is placed on a finger 22. The less protective portion 48 may be a retentive portion of a protective guard 20 that keeps the guard on a user's finger 22 or thumb 26. A circumference of inner surface 50 (shown in Figures 3-5) of the protective guard 20 may be smaller than an outer circumference of a finger 22 or thumb 26 that the guard is to be placed on. The elastic material may expand when the protective guard is positioned on the finger 22 or thumb 26. The elastic material may exert compressive force on the finger 22 or thumb 26 to hold protective guard 20 on the finger or thumb. The elastic properties of the material may form a seal between the finger 22 or thumb 26 and the protective guard 20. The seal may inhibit fluid from contacting the skin of the finger protected by the guard. Grooves may be formed in the elastic material (not shown) that may allow increased flexibility of protective guard 20.